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Editorial

Perspectives on Creative Pedagogy: exploring challenges, possibilities and potential

Internationally, the first decade of the 21st century was characterised by growth in creativity research and creative classroom practice (e.g. Einarsdottir, 2003; Cremin, Burnard and Craft, 2006; Beghetto and Kaufman 2007; Sawyer, 2010). In England, the Creative Partnerships initiative increased the attention paid by researchers, policy makers and practitioners to creativity in schooling, and an interest in creative learning at the primary phase developed (e.g. QCA, 2005; Galton, 2008; Bragg, Manchester and Faulkner, 2009; Thomson and Hall, 2007; Craft and Chappell, 2009). Whilst recognition of the role and nature of creativity and interest in creative pedagogical practice has grown, tensions persist at several levels, particularly in accountability cultures, where international comparisons such as PISA and PIRLS frame and shape policy, practice and curricula.

This Special Issue, planned with Anna Craft before her untimely death, responds to this context and draws together the work of a number of eminent scholars of creativity and creative pedagogies. It offers diverse perspectives from Colombia, Denmark, England, France, Poland, Hong Kong, and the USA and highlights differences as well as similarities across cultural contexts. Individually and collectively, the authors, framed by their own stances on creativity, reveal both the complexities and the possibilities of creative pedagogies. While some focus more upon conceptual challenges, others examine classroom practice, both teachers and visiting artists, and identify difficulties as well as potential. Most pay attention to both teacher and learner orientations, exemplified by Dezuanni and Jetnikoff's (2011:265) assertion that creative pedagogies involve 'imaginative and innovative arrangement of curricula and teaching strategies in school classrooms' to develop the creativity of the young. Indeed as Harris and Lemon (2012:426) researching in Australia observe:

In diverse contexts, including at-risk learners, elite schools, community arts interventions, in public pedagogies, or national level discourses about twenty-first century learners, creative approaches to learning seems a topic that concerns almost everyone' .

Despite such interest, dilemmas exist and research reveals that discrepancies abound. For example, teachers have differing conceptions of creativity (e.g. Dawson et al, 1999); may feel socially obliged to claim to value creativity in the classroom even if they do not (e.g. Runco and Johnson, 2002); may return to a default and authoritarian mode of operating in order to retain order (e.g. Besançon and Lubart, 2008); may be biased in favour of uncreative classroom behaviour (e.g. Beghetto 2007); and may be unaware their pedagogic practice actually inhibits creativity (e.g. Dawson et al., 1999).

Myths about creativity also persist. One such posits that it is an ability that people are born with (or without) and as such it is presumed that creativity is not possible to develop. As research has unequivocally shown, this is unfounded (e.g. Amabile, 1996; Nickerson, 1999). Another prevailing myth is that creativity is the preserve of the arts or arts education, yet as others have demonstrated, and this Special Issue endorses, it can be applied to many domains (e.g. van Oers, 2010; Mirzaie, Hamidi and Anaraki, 2009). Creativity, Sternberg (2010:394) argues is in essence a novel response - a habit - and like any other habit it can be encouraged and discouraged. He suggests that in order to promote this habit of responding to problems in novel and divergent ways: opportunities, encouragement and rewards are needed.

Yet in educational contexts with high stakes testing systems and over-reliance on curriculum controls, opportunities to practice the habit of creativity are inevitably constrained. Limited encouragement is given to teachers (or younger learners) to adopt a creative mindset and few rewards are offered for being creative in school. Working in cultures of performativity (Ball, 1998), teachers are subject to extensive accountability measures, for example through imposed specifications of the knowledge to be ‘delivered’, scripted instruction materials and ongoing inspections. This not only changes curriculum content but alters how learning takes place and what is recognised and valued as learning in schools. Practitioners, positioned as passive recipients of the prescribed agenda appear at times to have had their hands tied, their voices quietened and their professional autonomy constrained. As Mottram and Hall (2009:109) assert, the language of schooling has predominantly focused upon ‘oversimplified, easily measurable notions of attainment’. These scholars argue that this has had a homogenising effect, prompting children and their development to be discussed ‘according to levels and descriptors’, rather than as children, as unique learners (opcit). It seems the relentless quest for higher standards may have fostered a mindset characterised more by compliance and conformity than curiosity and creativity.

Whilst the downward pressure of assessment threatens to undermine teaching creatively (which NACCEE, 1999 saw as teacher oriented), teaching for creativity (seen as learner oriented) and creative learning, there is evidence internationally that despite the odds, creative pedagogues, working against the grain, have exercised the ‘power to innovate’ (Lance, 2006). Many have proactively sought ways to shape the curriculum responsively, appropriating national policies in their own contexts and showing professional commitment and imagination in the process (e.g. Comber and Kamler, 2011; Craft, McConnon and Matthews, 2012; Craft, Cremin, Hay and Clack, 2014; Cremin, Barnes and Scoffham, 2009; Einarsdottir, 2003; Poddiakov, 2011; Hetland and Winner, 2011; Woods and Jeffrey, 2009). This work implicitly challenges the predominantly neo-liberal rationale for creativity in education which focuses on economic benefits and instead asserts the value of creativity for self-actualisation whereby it is seen as an integral part of child development (Gibson, 2005). Perhaps such creative practitioners recognise creativity as a ‘central source of meaning’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002) in their own and other adults’ lives and seek to expand their repertoires of pedagogical practice in order to nurture younger learners’ creativity.

In a systematic review of environments and conditions that enhance creativity in children and young people, Davies et al., (2011) note that flexibility in the physical and the pedagogical environment is significant, alongside diverse resources; working beyond the classroom, (e.g. outdoors and in museums); and partnerships with outside agencies. In relation to the pedagogical environment, common characteristics they identified included: teachers balancing freedom and structure, and using playful/ games-based approaches which, the reviews suggests, help children exercise control over their learning and offer ownership of activities. In addition, there was strong evidence of mutual respect between staff and children, the modelling of creative attitudes on the part of adults, high expectations and considerable dialogue and collaborative work evidenced. Resisting the pressure to conform, it appears that the creative practitioners in the 200 plus studies that Davies et al., (2011) reviewed, took risks and encouraged the young people to do likewise. Teachers involved students as co-participants, offered work of personal significance and ensured there was time and space to experiment – together. They also modelled creativity and took part as learners in the classroom; experimenting with resources, engaging in problem-solving, taking up different roles, and generating and critiquing their ideas. As teachers they were self-evidently exercising the habit of creativity.

By being flexible, acting spontaneously and responding imaginatively to children's interests and questions, it is argued that creative teachers temper the planned with the lived (Cremin, 2015). In order to encourage learner creativity, it appears creative practitioners leave space for uncertainty and the unknown, and build on unexpected contributions or enquiries, fostering learner autonomy in the process. As Sawyer (2011) argues, creative teaching and learning is fundamentally collaborative and improvisational and 'creative learning is more likely to occur when the rigid division between teacher and student is somewhat relaxed, creating an environment where teachers and students jointly construct the improvisational flow of the classroom (opcit: 15).

In our first paper in the Special Issue, Vlad Glaveanu connects to this theme of collaboration and co-construction through reflecting upon an ongoing conversation about creativity and creative pedagogy with Zayda Sierra from Colombia and Lene Tanggaard from Denmark. These authors consider the two cultural settings, highlighting areas of commonality as well as difference and discuss the paradigmatic foundations of creativity in education and in schooling (labelled here as 'He, I and We') which they perceive frame much of the debates. They explore the resonances and consequences of these paradigms and, linking to the work of Lin (2011), note for example that the 'We' paradigm relates to creative pedagogies that focus upon the relationship between teachers and students; between teaching creatively and teaching for creativity. Nonetheless, their North- South deliberations cause them to question whether this paradigm in education is genuinely inclusive, and whether difference and diversity are sufficiently foregrounded in such an approach. This opening paper lays down a gauntlet and challenges us to re-examine what we have come to recognise as creative and valuable, who we recognise as creative, and, significantly whose creativity we legitimise and encourage.

In the following paper Baptiste Barbot, Maud Besançon and Todd Lubart from the USA and France also assert that the construct of creativity is neither sufficiently or consensually understood and that methodological barriers to accurately measuring creativity further constrain the development of students creative learning. Focusing on creative potential, they examine the critical issues of 'nature', 'measure', and 'nurture', arguing that this potentiality relies not only on a set of domain-general, domain-specific, and task relevant resources, but also on the ability to transform one's potential in a way which is recognised as creative in the given context. They highlight that creative potential is not "fixed"; it develops and evolves

over time and across different settings in response to ‘natural’ and targeted interventions. In arguing for more accurate assessment of creative potential in order to nurture or ‘train’ a child’s creativity (and evaluate the impact of educational contexts), they describe an ‘Evaluation of Potential Creativity’ (EPoC; Lubart et al., 2011;2013). This instrument aims to offer a comprehensive multidimensional evaluation of a child’s creative potential which can be used to develop tailored programmes of support for learners. It affords a needs-based, formative way forward, one which, as Barbot and her colleagues acknowledge, will also be influenced by classroom ethos and teachers’ attitudes toward creativity.

Imagination is the focus of the next paper. In this Dorota Dziedziewicz and Maciej Karwowski from Poland argue that it is important to analyse creative visual imagination both as a cognitive process and typologically so that different types of creative imagination are revealed. They commence with a brief but intriguing historical review of studies of imagination, and then share a new theoretical model of visual creative imagination which foregrounds three elements: vividness, originality, and transformative ability. These elements whilst described in earlier theories are newly combined here and analysed in a profile way. Vividness, originality, and transformative ability are thus posited as the key characteristics for the effective functioning of imagination and the consequences for assessment and developing imagination are considered. Their model is used as a matrix for describing and evaluating various training programmes, including several fictionally based programmes which seek to develop children’s creative imagination. Detailed explanation of the imaginative training programme ‘Eureka’ for 5-9 year olds is given, this aims to activate and stimulate development of creative imaging abilities as well as ‘release the passion to create’. Dziedziewicz and Karwowski argue that in any activities designed to stimulate children’s creative imagination, the aim should be to balance imagery, originality, and transformativeness, though they consider the last feature may need particular support.

Augmenting the underlying argument that fostering creativity and the imagination is possible through deploying creative pedagogies and tailored support, Anna Hui and her colleagues from Hong Kong next consider how creativity in education in Asian societies is positioned within educational policy and specific domains of knowledge. They argue that in Hong Kong, despite the fact that creativity is promoted at all levels of education, tensions and challenges exist in transforming this formal policy requirement, into informal playful learning opportunities. They report upon two empirical studies which sought to enrich creativity in young people: these focus upon infusing creative arts in the early childhood curriculum, and employing creative drama in subjects such as Chinese, English, and General Studies with young people aged 4-16. It is clear playfulness is a critical feature in the pedagogies employed, the playfulness and creative self-efficacy of teachers as well as students. In both studies, pre- and post-tests were employed to assess various aspects of children's creative thinking and potential, with the results tending to endorse the team's hypothesis that playfulness and arts-enriched learning can enhance creative performance. Hui and her colleagues highlight in particular the potency of drama as a medium for enriching teachers' personal creativity and their capacity to teach for creativity, linking this to the body of work on possibility thinking in the UK (e.g Craft et al., 2012; Cremin et al., 2013).

Moving from a focus on arts based pedagogy to that of science; the following paper draws upon the EU project Creative Little Scientists. This three year study (2011-2014) explored the potential for creativity in the mathematics and science education of 3-8 year olds in nine partner countries. Whilst the project encompassed literature reviews, comparative studies of policies and of teachers' views, as well as case studies of classroom practice, the team focus here on pedagogical synergies between inquiry-based science and creativity based approaches in early years. These, identified in the project's conceptual framework and in the later

fieldwork, were documented as including: play and exploration, motivation and affect, dialogue and collaboration, problem solving and agency, questioning and curiosity, reflection and reasoning, and teacher scaffolding and involvement. The team argue a dynamic relationship exists between inquiry-based and creative based approaches to teaching and learning. Extracts from case studies in Belgium, Germany and Northern Ireland seek to show that early years inquiry-based science approaches link to the problem-finding/ problem solving approach developed by those who teach creatively and teach for creativity. The paper also highlights the often unrecognised potential for creativity in exploratory science contexts across Europe.

Pat Thomson and Christine Hall's paper also draws upon a single project: the Signature Pedagogies project situated in England and funded by Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE) following the demise of Creative Partnerships (CP) (2003-2011). Drawing on their earlier work documenting artists working with schools under the CP initiative, Thomson and Hall came to perceive that creative pedagogies used by artists were in some way distinct, reflecting their own 'handwritten signature'. In this paper, they examine an aspect of the wider project, namely the way in which artists approached the issue of inclusion, seen here as catering for diversity and difference and changing the learning opportunities on offer as a consequence. They focus on the work of story-makers in nursery settings and primary schools, and reveal the democratic participatory practices that the artists adopted. These encompass a potent trio of beliefs: every child is capable of having ideas; every child can contribute vitally to discussions; and every child is essential to a collective 'performance'. Though the snapshots from the children's work with the artists offer layered evidence of these beliefs in action, it is, as Thomson and Hall acknowledge, no simple matter for teachers to emulate artists' alternative pedagogical practices. Teachers are positioned differently. However, some of the research studies noted earlier in this editorial, suggest that creative teachers find their own ways forward, many also seek to be inclusive, recognising children as unique individuals and creative thinkers.

Our final paper in this Special Issue retains a focus on artists working alongside teachers. In this, Maurice Galton draws on case studies of schools from a project in England concerning the impact of Creative Partnerships on student wellbeing (McLellan, Galton, Stewart & Page, (2012). In order to foreground the impact of artists on primary teachers' thinking and pedagogic practice, he uses the cases to explore differences in the ways teachers in CP and non CP schools implemented the curriculum and interacted with their pupils. The differences are telling, as are the features in common shared by all three CP schools. Galton suggests the latter include the existence of positive collaborative working relationships between teachers and CP practitioners who planned together and regularly discussed children's learning. The CP school teachers appeared to want to learn from their artist partners, and, through working alongside them, and engaging in reflective review-like discussions, gained confidence as creative professionals who seemed more prepared to take risks. Galton also notes that through this working partnership, the pedagogic focus shifted from learning outcomes to learning processes and that as a consequence, thinking skills, emotional literacy, communication skills, problem solving and collaboration were afforded attention in the CP schools. Lastly he observes that the assessment of outcomes in these schools foregrounded collaboration and joint products (such as exhibitions and performances), rather than individual ones. Thus, he argues the opportunity to work for extended periods with artists in schools can impact upon professional practice despite the incessant pressures of the performativity culture.

Taken together the papers in this Special Issue challenge us to re-examine what internationally we recognise as creativity and imagination in education, how we assess/measure these capacities and the ways in which we seek to foster them. The authors also afford some degree of optimism that teachers can, (and that some do), assert their agency, confront their practice and risk transforming this in order to develop the habit of

creativity in their students. For creative pedagogues a sense of adventure and autonomy attends the experimentation involved in making curricular changes. Whilst this is not without tension, recognising their responsibilities to the young, they seek (often in partnership with others), to effect a balance between structure and improvisation and in Anna Craft's words, possibility think their ways forward.

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